

The Library Assistant

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The Hundredth Year

YOUNGER assistants have long asked for a statement of public library aims—a yardstick whereby to measure achievement. The American Library Association's efforts in this direction have been admired by many who would have them emulated here. These people will not be contented by, but they will at least find some consolation in, *A Century of Public Library Service: where do we stand to-day?* which is the most positive pronouncement to date from our parent body on this question, and is, we hope, a precedent.

It would be easy to find fault with individual pages or paragraphs in the pamphlet, but it would be of small service to the cause of better libraries. What can be done, by assistants, to take full advantage of the centenary year, and of the "Library Association Centenary Assessment" in particular, to improve the prestige of the library service in their own district? Several things suggest themselves, but the most obvious is that of assessing and perfecting their own contribution to it. It is drastically easy to be overconscious of the moles in the bookstock, while remaining blind to the beams in our attitude to the public, or to our imperfect acquaintance with the stock.

Every public library assistant owes it to his employing authority, to local residents, his chief, his colleagues and to himself to improve the quality of his library work during 1950, to increase his knowledge of books and other materials, and his mastery of the techniques of the profession, but even more to ensure that all he does during the 1,900 hours of service is helpful to his employer—the resident. Public esteem is not won by our ability to pass examinations.

Chief Librarians' claims for increased financial support of the service will tend to be successful in the degree that they are supported by assistants giving full value for the money already spent by ratepayers, who are usually shrewd judges of a bargain, and are more likely to agree to a higher library rate if convinced that the present sum is well spent. The assistant can best assure this by setting his colleagues the standard he believes they should maintain, so that when, a year from now, the Centenary Year is regarded in retrospect and an assessment is made of its effectiveness in commending public libraries to the public attention, no one will have cause to say that

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are —"
clockwatching, rude, surly, untidy, incompetent, slovenly, ignorant,
unpunctual procrastinators?

A NOTE ON MEMBERSHIP.

Assistants are reminded that when paying their Library Association subscription they should indicate on the form or in their covering letter their wish to become, or remain, members of the A.A.L. Section. If they do not, no capitation grant is paid to this Association in respect of them, and they cannot be counted as members. The work of the A.A.L. is being hampered by lack of funds; only a large membership will enable it to complete its full programme for the coming year.

A Letter to Members

AS PRESIDENT of the Association for 1950, I am given a privilege of which I gladly avail myself, that of sending a message of greeting to all members.

1950 is a significant year for the Association, and your Council has arranged a comprehensive and interesting programme to celebrate the centenary of the first Public Libraries Act. This programme has been focussed on the launching of an extensive list of new publications, the holding of a week-end conference and the production of a documentary film. Your officers and Council in other ways hope to make this a year which will add further to the prestige the Association already has. Fuller details of the programme are given elsewhere.

With the publication of the *Assistant* ten times each year, it is to be hoped that full advantage will be taken by members of the additional space. This Association exists to encourage expression of points of view and will, I trust, long continue to fulfil this aim.

Our large and countrywide membership prevents your President from having personal acquaintance with all members. I trust I shall, however, during this year, be able to meet many of you either at our Annual General Meeting or during the Library Association Conference.

To all members I send, on behalf of the Officers and Council of the Association, good wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

F. C. TIGHE.

Council Notes

IT is really quite astonishing that an Association with over five thousand members should continue to achieve so much and work so effectively without paid staff. The reasons for this are many and complex, but one of the more obvious is the work done by the Council of the Association. At the fifth meeting of the present session the official record of the proceedings occupied six foolscap pages.

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

The day started at 9.30 a.m. with a meeting of the Conditions and Services Committee. They were concerned with the grading of library assistants by the National Joint Council, with general welfare conditions of public library staffs and the working conditions and pay of library assistants employed in non-public libraries. They decided to ask the Education Committee to consider at their next meeting the implications of the recent changes in the payment of grants by local authorities for educational purposes. At 10.30 a.m. the Press and Publications Committee got under way. *The A.A.L. Guide* is to be published in the near future at 5/6 (4/6 to members), and the committee hopes to publish the first three of the *Primer Series* on Cataloguing, Assistance to Readers and Work with Children in the Spring. They also recommended that next year the distribution of publications should be the responsibility of the Honorary Assistant Editor (Mr. G. P. Rye) instead of the Honorary Education Secretaries (Mr. and Mrs. Martin) who are quite unable to cope with both educational work and an extensive programme of new publications.

The Education and Library Committee met at the same time, deliberating a report that 533 students had applied for the October—November courses and a detailed memorandum on the standardised correspondence courses. The Committee expressed their concern at the lack of tutors for 1950 and stressed the need for all qualified librarians who were able and willing to do this work to get in touch with their Divisional committees. The Librarian of the combined Library Association and A.A.L. libraries (Mr. Henrik Jones) reported to the Committee on the use and development of the library since July.

At 11.30 a.m. the Finance and General Purposes Committee met to consider the estimates for next year. 1950 is an important year for public libraries, during which the A.A.L. could play an even more important part but for its restricted finances. The Honorary Membership Secretary reported that 1,372 members had either not paid their subscriptions to the Library Association or had not asked to join the A.A.L. when they did so. With these members we would reach a record membership of 6,100.

The Council approved the work of its committees after they had decided to ask the Library Association to make arrangements for an A.A.L. session at the Centenary Conference. They then proceeded to consider a proposal from the Honorary Treasurer of the Library Association that the capitation grant to the A.A.L. should be reduced in view of the difficult financial position of the Library Association. After a long discussion it was decided that the proposal could not be accepted.

This was Mr. Pearson's last Council meeting as President of the Association, and the Vice-President—Mr. F. C. Tighe—expressed the gratitude of both the Council and the general membership of the Association to him for his outstanding contribution to the profession as a member, as a former Divisional Secretary, and more particularly as President of the Association of Assistant Librarians.

E.A.C.

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

1950 and the A.A.L.

E. A. CLOUGH

THERE are two ways for an Association such as ours to celebrate the centenary of the Public Libraries Act. One way is to look back and remark that a hundred years is a long time and ponder on the glory of having lived a century as though time in itself were a virtue. The other is to seize the opportunity for an evaluation of our achievements and then, conscious of their meagreness, go forward determined to make the second century a hundred years of real achievement.

The committee appointed by the Council of the Association emphasised at its first meeting that 1950 must be a year of increased professional activity: a year in which the Divisions will undertake wider responsibilities in the sphere of professional education through part time lectures, week-end schools and professional meetings in which the Association will go forward with its work of reorganising the correspondence courses and making them more widely available and at the same will endeavour to publish text books worthy of the library profession; a year which will, in fact, hold promise for the future.

The Council were also aware that this centenary was an outstanding opportunity for effective publicity on behalf of the public libraries movement. They believe that the advance of public libraries is held up at all levels because the public are generally unaware of their achievements and potentialities. It was decided that as far as the Association's limited resources would allow, the public should be told.

Starting next year, the Correspondence Courses of the Association will be standardised. This very necessary and desirable reform will ensure that each course reaches the highest possible standard and will be prepared to a plan approved by the Education Committee and the Council. These courses and all other professional training will be helped in the Centenary year by the extension of the *Primer Series* to cover cataloguing, assistance to readers, library work with children and bibliography. It is also intended to publish the *Library Assistant* monthly.

The special activities of the Association are largely contained in the programme for a week-end Conference to be held in London from 31st March to 2nd April. The details of this Conference were announced in the last issue. The Council believe that this week-end will be a memorable experience for all those assistants fortunate enough to take part. One of the features of the Conference will be the Annual General Meeting at Greenwich.

A good deal of preliminary publicity has already been given in the press to the centenary through the efforts of the Council. During the year the press, supported by the B.B.C., should be in a position to keep public libraries in the news.

The Association has, however, embarked on a number of publicity projects, the most important of which is the 16mm. sound film which is being produced under the direction of Walter F. Broome, of Lambeth Public Libraries. This film will cover the public library service of to-day; it will emphasise the importance of highly skilled staff; it will survey the

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

type of service given by the various departments of a library; it will glance over the many extension activities designed to bring books to readers wherever they are—the hospital service, reading for the blind, prison libraries and libraries in schools; it is designed to show the public what can be done. The film, which will run for about seventeen minutes, will be available for renting or purchase in a few months' time.

The Association has co-operated very actively with the Library Association in all this work. One of the more obvious results of this co-operation will be the sets of photographs suitable for exhibition purposes showing the development and achievements of the public library service. Four or five sets with twenty or thirty photographs in each set will be available for renting or purchase, and it is hoped, in this way, that the various national and international organisations responsible for the distribution of information will know something of British libraries. At the same time the more obvious purpose of the sets has not been overlooked, for they are intended primarily for the local librarian who wishes to provide a background of display material for his own exhibition on the centenary.

In 1950 each Division will prepare its own Centenary programme, realising that three-quarters of our members are dependent on them for a link with their profession; that without Divisional activities, the A.A.L. often means nothing more than the *Library Assistant*.

The Centenary year of the Public Libraries Act must be the beginning of our second century rather than the end of our first.

In and Out of Context

S. C. HOLLIDAY

WE are led to believe that the library assistant is a poor student and a bad examinee. We learn from examiners' reports and from the reports of those parasites who evaluate examiners' reports that the library assistant can't write, can't spell, has a cavalier disregard for grammar, knows nothing and fails miserably to conceal his ignorance, cannot frame a sentence, a paragraph or a page, and has no conception of or feeling for style.

Doubtless some—maybe all—of the sages' criticism is justified, though it is doubtful if any examinee's answer paper is the place wherein to find literary and linguistic graces. And doubtless some of this criticism is the product of that deep-rooted and natural instinct in man to abuse and deride his successors. Youth will always be decadent; and probably always half-witted: soundness, manliness, virtue and authoritative knowledge and opinion will always be the property and perquisites of experience and senility. Doubtless, too, some of the criticism results from the ignorance and naivety of the examiners themselves.

Wherever and however the library assistant study, his studies will be based on observation and books, chiefly on books. The examiners appear to assume (perhaps they have a right to assume) that every library assistant has ready access to text-books. In this they err—and badly. Show me a

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

hundred libraries, and I will show you ninety-seven wherein staff libraries are non-existent or farcical. True, there are four—maybe six—special collections on librarianship in the country; but they cannot hope to serve the thousands of student librarians. Should not the keen student buy his text-books? He should: they are obtainable, despite the alleged shortage. But after he has eaten (none too well) and dressed (rather badly) he has no money. Recent experience leads me to deplore the presumption of those—and they are many—who tackle the examinations with no hope of proper preparation and no chance (miracles excluded) of success.

But this is not a diatribe against authorities who deny the tools of study to assistants; nor against chief librarians who couldn't care less. I call attention to a graver matter—the quality of library text-books: to those works listed in the *L.A. Yearbook* "for the guidance of teaching institutions . . . and as a means of help to tutors and the private student." Not merely is the L.A. list far too long: many of the books included are pathetic, ill-written trash. With the exception of a couple of American works and a squib or two by Savage, there is nothing in the list to awaken in the student an enthusiasm for his job, a sense of respect for what should be a worthwhile profession, or to give him a positive approach to librarianship; and emphatically is there nothing to give him a sense of style or to suggest to him that library matters may be discussed in a forthright and salty manner.

Space is not available to criticize particular works or to discuss the shortcomings of text-books in detail: we may, however, sample some of the gems, profundities and flowers of English that have been prepared and are recommended for the instruction and enlightenment of the aspiring student by our thinkers, administrators and theorists.

At the outset, the library assistant receives biological assurance. A British library periodical tells him: "*Librarians . . . are (thankfully) human beings,*" and an American scholar—though somewhat deprecating—says: "*Librarians, while scarcely angels, are human . . .*". Astonished and grateful, fixed between the dumb and the divine, the assistant hurdles the physical barrier (scarcely noticing his appendix) only to be plunged into a morass of introspection by the statement: "*. . . peculiarities in personality may be handicaps in one type of library and yet assets in another.*" Angrily convincing himself that he is merely eccentric, and not the library idiot, he proceeds a step further, only to find himself engaged in a sex war, for he is told: "*Men have got to realize that the competition of women as librarians is a serious one, and that it is necessary for men to meet it by perfecting themselves . . .*" Half-persuaded that something in the phrasing of that sentence makes it necessary for men to meet it by grinding their teeth, he nevertheless takes a brief interval to perfect himself. Perfection is not enough: he soon learns that "*for small towns the women . . . make better librarians than men*"; and he is baffled and crest-fallen when the oracle blandly concludes: "*I do not try to give reasons for this state of affairs.*" Nevertheless, he is spurred by ambition, and settles down to serious study.

He knows that the purpose of librarianship, roughly speaking, is to help men to get and read books, and he nods with adolescent approval

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

when he is told by a former university librarian: "*[The librarian] should be ready at a moment's notice to deliver a lecture on the art of reading.*" He turns a page or two of the pundit's work, and is brought to an abrupt halt by the statement: "*Than much of the reading done at the expense of the library rate it would be better if no reading were done at all.*" That esoteric remark is wholly unintelligible to him (and to me, you and the examiners) and he hastily abandons the study of reading, and turns to classification.

He follows the common prescription, splashing through the mud of some alleged contributions to science written in the last century; he climbs Porphyry's tree, descends and treks through Brown's arid wastes, and cuts through the tangled briars of Dui. Almost spent but still hopeful, he is at last felled to the ground by a modern master, who snarls: "*In attempting to reduce this complicated three-dimensional branch to the two-dimensional trellis of our classification, we should first put down the four main branches that spring from its principal bifurcations. . . .*"

However, he is revived by a lucid draught from Pierce Butler, who says with truth: "*So obvious a thing as literary style seems to lie beyond the comprehension of vast numbers of habitual bookmen. It is a thing that everyone talks about, but very few are personally aware of its existence.*" Style—style's the thing, mutters the assistant, and turns to a chapter on "Style" in another recommended text-book. Here he learns: "*Since all progress of mind consists for the most part in differentiation, in the resolution of an obscure and complex object into its component parts, it is surely the stupidest of losses to confuse things which right reason has put asunder, to lose the sense of achieved distinctions, the distinction between poetry and prose for instance, or, to speak more exactly, between the laws and characteristic excellencies of verse and prose composition.*" So that is style!—our assistant exclaims, and makes a careful note on his tablets. (In time perhaps the innocent assistant may emulate one of our English librarians who is an examiner and who has never quite achieved his obvious ambition to write a sentence three or maybe four or perchance five or even six pages long or longer without a punctuation mark—gasp!).

Having mastered—or at least observed—the intricacies of English prose, the assistant must acquaint himself with library organization and method. The following profound, if curiously expressed, fact is laid before him by another former university librarian: "*. . . the actual clerical and manual work involved in a librarian's responsibility is done mainly by his subordinates . . .*" Too gloomy true, sighs the assistant, picking up another recommended tome. This has an introduction by a former university library school director, who says: "*All librarians . . . ought to read this book; it will make them think.*" The assistant thinks long and in a hysterical manner when the thought-provoking author writes: "*Except in the North of England, where tea-time is a part of the serious business of life, afternoon tea is a relaxation the branch librarian should be prepared to snatch as he can.*"

Hints and tips crowd upon him. An English librarian informs him: "*It is sometimes desirable to remit fines in cases of . . . death.*" (Asbestos overdue notices are in short supply). The master-mind also observes:

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

"It is not good policy to let borrowers think you suspect their honesty." And while on the subject of public relations, another authority gives this warning: "It is astonishing the venom which can emanate from someone with a pet monkey or parrot when asked to take the animal out of the building." (The assistant rushes to his chief. Without delay, a notice is exhibited: "READERS ARE COURTEOUSLY REQUESTED TO LEAVE THEIR MONKEYS AND PARROTS AT THE LIBRARY ENTRANCE," and the emanation of venom is thereby prevented).

The examination is imminent, and the assistant rapidly revises his punctuation and grammar by the following examples—"typist error," "the borrowers register," "the question of withdrawals . . . now require elucidation"; and as an impressive opening for a sentence he notes: "Thus it would seem that with . . .". Strong in wisdom, and ripe (almost over-ripe) in style, the assistant marches gravely to the examination centre. Having satisfied the examiners as to the creator of Tiny Tim, and written down a surefire source for the latest articles on fly-papers, he leaves the room in an elevated mood, in a mood so elevated, indeed, that he remembers a sentence in a very recent issue of a library monthly, the construction of which is: "[A mood of elevation] lives on with the reasoning which makes our bumbles want us to be directors rather than what we really are."

The examination over, the assistant doesn't care what we are, or what the writer means: he is off to the Conference for "... the real purpose surely of annual conferences—the unloading of the soul's burdens to sympathetic ears."

Students' Problems

A. J. WALFORD

A LETTER, sent by Mr. R. E. Gutridge, A.L.A., of Southall Public Libraries, has been passed to me for comment. The letter is too lengthy for full quotation, and I trust that Mr. Gutridge will forgive me for cutting slightly and altering the wording a little here and there. It runs much as follows:—

In his article in the May-June *Assistant*, Mr. Corbett enquires why so many students fail to complete their A.A.L. Correspondence Courses and sit for the Examination. A little thought provides the reasons without the bother of statistics.

The prospective possessor of the A.L.A., following the postal courses, faces concentrated work for a minimum of three years. The knowledge demanded by the syllabuses is wide; the amount of reading needed to obtain a full grasp of the subject is extensive. Therefore outside interests and other forms of relaxation must be reduced to a minimum, if not completely eliminated.

Regular study, unless it be limited to the small hours, is impossible except in a few isolated cases. Most members of the profession have to work irregular hours, limiting study to whenever free time is available. It is one of the canons of the steady assimilation of knowledge, essential to passing examinations that—unless, of course, you have a

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

photographic mind—this assimilation must be done at regular intervals. Study, of course, can be done—and in the library profession unfortunately must be done—at odd times, but there is no doubt that it is much more easily effected at fixed predetermined periods every day, so that the mind becomes accustomed to receiving its daily quota of learning. Work at odd times can be done reasonably well, but it needs much more concentration than regular study.

For the aspirant to the Fellowship, who expects to pass every Examination at the first sitting, the above applies also, only in a more marked fashion. To the greater number of candidates six years of war helped not one iota towards the necessary degree of concentration required to pass the Final Examinations. Even after four years, something of the restlessness and chaos of that appalling era makes itself felt in everyday life. The post-war Finals candidate is, more often than not, married and has a family; study at home is virtually impossible except, again, in a few isolated cases. Therefore, if he is going to accomplish any amount of work at all, for the sake of peace and quiet and the ready access to books, he must work at the Library, thereby unnaturally restricting his home life. For the Final Examinations, "in order to test the mature judgment of the candidate," the reading must be even wider still. The necessary reading which has to be crammed into a year demands every spare moment; there is simply no time for anything else. However, to the married man, the call of wife and family often supersedes that of the Library Association. Inevitably, sooner or later, if he is working at a Correspondence Course, he finds that he has fallen behind because of illness or some other vital need which insists on his presence at home instead of within the confines of his work. Another two lessons, perhaps, and he is far behind. Realising that he must either miss the lessons and reading—which, owing to the concentrated nature of the Course, he really cannot afford to do—or make superhuman efforts to make up the lost ground, he refuses to work himself to a standstill for the sake of cramming into a year what many men devote a lifetime of study. Reluctantly, he gives up the Course, to work as best he can, when he can.

A further deterrent is revealed by the "new" syllabus to operate from 1950. The Finals student who has devoted a year of study to Bibliography is politely informed that, if he passes the Exam. under the present syllabus, it will only equate to *one* paper in Bibliography under the "new" syllabus. Before he can qualify as having passed Part 1, there is yet another paper to sit for and pass. The same applies to Literature. If he is unfortunate enough to have passed both Literature and Bibliography, he will have to take *both* papers again and pass them. Presuming he has an encyclopaedic memory, this will be easily accomplished, but as this asset is rather uncommon, it means a great deal of extra work and more money to pay for extra examination fees.

The student is forced to the conclusion that the change in syllabus after the end of the war was both hurried and ill-timed, and that the epithet "learned" which is usually applied to the profession, now sounds

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

somewhat ludicrous. Certainly no other body would tolerate such indecision on the part of their examining authority.

The remedy would be to increase the length of the Correspondence Course and to decrease the amount of subject matter in each lesson. It would at least give the earnest student time to cover the lesson to his own and the tutor's satisfaction and afford him greater interest in his subject. I would suggest to the Hon. Education Secretaries that if they draw up another table at the end of the next series of Correspondence Courses, without altering the Course length, or effecting some change, they will find an even further increase in the number of people who fail to complete their studies.

Mr. Gutridge has raised a great many controversial points. I can deal with only a few of them here. At the outset I must accuse him of inconsistency here and there. For instance, he casts doubts on the learnedness of the library profession; yet he finds the revised Final syllabus too exacting. He does, however, score heavily with regard to the candidate whose professional studies have been interrupted by war service. I would remind him that such cases have in the past been given sympathetic hearing when free places to Library Schools have been applied for. These, of course, could only have met the needs of a small minority, but were the opportunities always embraced? Mr. Gutridge injures his case, surely, by considering study only in terms of correspondence courses; they must always constitute a second best, oral tuition being preferable in the normal course of events.

However, Mr. Gutridge's real quarrel is with (a) the present syllabus for the Final Examinations, and (b) the efficacy of the present system of correspondence course (presumably, only with regard to the Final).

I must question Mr. Gutridge's accuracy (or wording) when he declares that if the student "is unfortunate enough to have passed both Literature and Bibliography, he will have to take *both* papers again and pass them." In point of fact, he must sit in each case for one of the two papers set, and he may choose which. This may be unfortunate (indeed, we have had too many transitions from one syllabus to another in the past), but it is not so black as my correspondent makes it.

One also sympathises with the candidate who now has to study for two papers instead of one in these Final subjects; but he has had several months' warning. The revised syllabus was published in the *Record* of November, 1948, giving him a full year to prepare for the December, 1949, examination under the old syllabus.

I do not know whether there are many who agree with Mr. Gutridge regarding the brevity of the present Final Correspondence Courses. Mr. Martin informs me that, in general, there are continual complaints that the courses are *too long*; hence the dropping off after the third or fourth lesson; hence the "plunge" taken half-way through the course by venturesome spirits who decide to sit in June instead of the following December (some of them pass, too). But I grant that these latter conditions may apply only to the Registration courses. Even so, Mr. Gutridge does not take account of flagging interests which are bound to result from a

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

two years' correspondence course. Summer holidays create a hiatus. Also, it is fallacious to argue that twice the amount of study must necessarily require twice the amount of time. Personally, I find that three-month spurts very well suit the ebb and flow of my own interests. The student should early attempt to find out what are his own reactions in this respect. In any case, oral tuition for the Final is very definitely to be sought as far as possible.

I cannot sympathise altogether with Mr. Guttridge regarding time for study. The serious student should regard his professional studies as a business proposition, if nothing more: he invests so many hours, so much concentration, in order to get returns; he must devote a few hours per week to the necessary reading and study and he must keep those hours sacred, so far as is humanly possible. Two full evenings per week are preferable to one hour per day, for most people. Think about some particular point or points, of course, every day, but concentrated study and the answering of questions are, on the whole, best done in bouts. To invest in this way clearly means sacrifice over a total period of, say, four years; but, after all, the student is trying to build up his life's career and that should have no low priority.

Granted the correspondence course, I think something might be done to humanise it, for both Registration and Final students. Tutors could, whenever possible, be allotted students within their vicinity; they could then arrange to meet those students two or three times during the course, preferably all together. Discussion of knotty points and the clearing up of misconceptions would result; the artificial barrier between tutor and pupil which at present exists could thereby be broken down. (Hence, to some extent, the *raison d'être* of the A.A.L. Revision and Reference Schools). Or, again, correspondence courses might be run from September to June, in line with oral courses and obviating that fatal summer holiday break. There are, no doubt, very good reasons why this second proposal has not been taken up, but I feel that something might be done to facilitate the closer liaison of the tutor and his students.

Outcrop

R. L. COLLISON

EVERY one of us comes across from time to time some article on books or librarianship in periodicals or books which otherwise have little connection with these subjects. The two classic examples are Meyer Berger's brilliant description of reference library work in America under the title "Q's and A's," which appeared in the *New Yorker* of 27th January, 1940, pages 32-36 (and which Mr. Bryon's predecessor wisely reprinted in the columns of this journal (June, 1940, pages 111 to 116); and Aldous Huxley's devastating analysis of the methods of revision of the Staff of the Encyclopædia Britannica in his "Beyond the Mexique Bay" (Chatto and Windus, 1934, pages 113 to 118). In this new feature I hope to draw to your attention the more important items of this kind as they appear. Widespread co-operation is the only basis on which this can be achieved, and although, because of shortness of notice, the present contri-

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

butions come from the staff of Westminster, I hope that in future suggestions will be sent to me from every part of the country. The only criterion can be: "Is this something which I wish every librarian would read?" Items need not necessarily be new, and they may be picked from books or newspapers or periodicals, providing they are not part of every librarian's professional reading. It will help if, together with the title, author and exact reference, a short annotation of anything up to 150 words—according to the degree of importance of the item—can be supplied. In this way it should be possible to list some ten or twelve outstanding features every month.

The Mass Observation survey of reading at Tottenham is by now well-known, but "Willesden and the new towns," by Bertram Hutchinson (Social Survey, December, 1947), has received very little notice. Social Survey carried out this enquiry for the Ministry of Town and Country Planning in the winter of 1946-47 "to obtain social data relevant to the establishment of new towns, and to the replanning of the Borough of Willesden." Part 5 (pages 48 to 59) of this fascinating report is devoted to a study of the use of social facilities, and from a mass of statistics we learn that while 82% of the adult population (i.e., over 18 years of age) go to cinemas, and 57% to theatres, 27% use the public library system, and only 2% go to evening classes. One interesting point that arose was the fact that there is little difference in the proportions of married and single people who use public libraries, and it is useful to know that 18% borrow books at least once a week. The point that 91% of those who borrow live within 15 minutes of their nearest library (and that 84% walk there) is helpful in future planning. The survey is built on questionnaires obtained from 1,471 addresses out of a possible total of 40,320, and will repay careful study.

Mr. Harold Smith writes that an attractively titled article, "All for a packet of Woodbines" (*Tribune*, 23rd September, 1949, page 9) spotlights the efforts of Plymouth's chief, Best Harris, to rebuild the city's badly damaged library service: "In one disastrous night in 1941, Plymouth public libraries lost two-thirds of their books. The Central Library was wiped out." The publicity technique employed to bring home the existence of the public library service to the Plymouth citizens is an example that might well be employed by others. The establishment of new lending library branches, of a drama library of 10,000 volumes of complete acting sets of plays which may be had on extended loan for amateur societies, of a greatly developed reference service which acts as a kind of living directory for Plymouth's industries and many other features are encouraging and heartening. All this now costs the worthy citizens 2s. 6d. each per year—£25,000 in all. So far, so good; it is now time for Plymouth to move on from Woodbines to Balkan Sobranie.

The latest edition of the Oxford University Handbook (1949) contains a fascinating chapter (pages 189 to 211) on the libraries of the University, by G. N. Clark and the staff of the Bodleian, in which the complex organisation of that institution and its associate libraries is clearly explained, together with a history of the development of the remaining libraries which is unencumbered by dates. Another annual, "Planning: the architect's handbook" (6th edition, 1949) gives a miniature textbook on library plan-

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

ning (pages 303-320) which is full of useful figures, plans and formulae. There are one or two out-of-date ideas such as "wooden seats are usual in periodical rooms to discourage 'loafers,' but they seem a disadvantage to the genuine user"; but these are offset by welcome information on accommodation for gramophone records, illustrations, collections and microfilms. Maps are inadequately treated, but special libraries receive fairly full attention.

The November issue of the *Stationery Trades Review* (pages 663 to 671), says Miss Muriel McKinlay, is once again devoted to the annual Children's Book Feature. Among several articles on children's literature is one of particular interest: Stanley C. Dedman, Children's Librarian of Leyton, discusses in an interview the ideas he put forward at this year's Conference. Among other things he emphasises the need for intelligent modern illustration of the classics so that they shall appear as digestible literature rather than antique relics; and that there is a lack of books treating advanced scientific, technical and practical topics in simple language for older boys. In the same issue, some very popular children's authors, including Enid Blyton, Geoffrey Trease, Aubrey de Selincourt, give their personal views on literature and the principles they themselves employ in their writing. It is interesting to compare this with the recent correspondence on this subject in the *Bookseller*. Miss McKinlay also points out that a harbinger of 1950's anticipated avalanche of interest and publicity for libraries appears in *Public Service and Administration* (November, page 26), which has taken the Library Association's "Century of public library service" to its bosom and prints a series of extracts from it.

Mr. Owen Keen resurrects from the columns of the *Spectator* (11th July, 1947, pages 40 to 41), Helen Kirkpatrick's unjustly neglected "(R).S.V.P.," and writes that Parisians and others in certain provincial French cities have a unique reference service literally at their fingertips. It operates entirely by telephone, and is contacted by dialling S.V.P. General information—timetables, prices, addresses, etc.—is available to the ordinary subscriber for 125 francs a month. Special services dealing with law, economics, commerce and technical information cost much more: between one and two thousand francs. The organisation has numerous contracts with Ministries and other special sources, employs 300 people, and can call on 400 specialists. The extent of its use can be judged from the figure of 30,000 subscribers in 1946, making 7,000 calls each day between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Correspondence

THE NAKED AND THE DEAD.

Mr. J. G. O'Leary, F.L.A., *Borough Librarian, Dagenham*, writes:—

"When I was an Assistant of Mr. Dudley's age we, myself and contemporaries, used to engage in somewhat similar speculation on the provision of books that a small part of the world condemned as improper. We all hoped that time would heal this particular form of Glaucoma, but apparently it has not

"I have read 'The Naked and the Dead.' My main objection to it is

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

its length. The question is not so much over this particular book, but the general principle that gets books of this sort banned in Ireland and the Colonies.

"Thirty years ago I thought this sort of introvert censorship would disappear from libraries. I was wrong.

"We are just as big humbugs as ever we were."

A.A.L. VOTING.

Mr. W. E. G. Critchley, A.L.A., *Senior Assistant, Aberdeen Public Libraries*, writes:—

"Further to Miss Williams's letter about the motion to exclude Chief Librarians from official posts in the Association, I suggest that the Council should put this to a postal vote at once. It would be as well for the Council to state that in future, any other question affecting policy will be decided thus."

Mr. R. J. Hoy, B.Sc., A.L.A., *The Library, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine*, writes:—

"There are quite a few non-public libraries, usually highly specialised in character, which are so small that they are run by one or two people. It does not follow that they are therefore insignificant—any one may well be the most important in its field, to which others turn naturally for information.

"In such cases the senior member of the staff may, with complete propriety, call himself Chief Librarian, without any distortion of facts or words, yet many of the duties performed by such an one will be done by juniors in larger establishments.

"The wording of the resolution, if strictly interpreted, would prevent such librarians as I have described from holding office in the A.A.L., yet I often feel that such as they, if they could be sufficiently interested in the work of the A.A.L., would exercise a very wholesome influence, since they, of all librarians, have the opportunity to see the profession in the round, as they do all the jobs from committee work and book selection down to book-plating and stamping."

Mr. E. A. Clough, F.L.A., *Deputy Librarian, Brighton Public Library, and Hon. Secretary, the A.A.L.*, writes:—

"When the Council in considering the agenda of the Annual General Meeting decide, without a dissenting voice being raised, to oppose a particular motion, and when the Annual General Meeting reject the same motion by an overwhelming majority, one can hardly blame the Honorary Officers, the Council or anybody else for not putting the matter to a card vote."

A.A.L. Correspondence Courses

EXAMINATION RESULTS—JUNE, 1949.

A total of 480 students enrolled for correspondence courses for the session April, 1948, to June, 1949. Of these, 228 completed the course, and 227 sat for the examinations in June. Of this 227, 148 were successful, 73 failed, and 6 were referred, the total percentage of passes being 65, as

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

compared with 48.7% for all candidates for the Library Association examinations. Results for the individual examinations showed that 78% of correspondence course students who completed the course passed the Entrance examination, 58% of Registration students, and 60% of Final students, as compared with the figures for all candidates, 64.3%, 43.2% and 48.3% respectively.

Detailed figures are as follows:—

	No. of students.	Completed course.	Sat for exam. June, '49.	Passed.	Failed.	Ref.	% of Passes.
Entrance ..	141	76 (54%)	77	60	17	—	78
Registration, A(i)	63	30 (47%)	26	10	14	2	38
" A(ii)	57	22 (38%)	23	12	10	1	52
" B(iii)	42	17 (40%)	21	15	4	2	71
" B(iv)	42	17 (40%)	21	18	2	1	86
" C(v)	45	17 (38%)	18	10	8	—	55.5
" C(vi)	32	13 (41%)	11	5	6	—	45
Final, Part 1 ..	18	12 (67%)	10	4	6	—	45
" " 2 ..	13	9 (69%)	7	2	5	—	28.5
" " 3a ..	13	9 (69%)	8	8	—	—	100
" " 3b ..	1	1 (100%)	1	1	—	—	100
" " 3c ..	2	(nil)	—	—	—	—	—
" " 4a ..	2	4 (44%)	4	3	1	—	75
" " 5d ..	2	(nil)	—	—	—	—	—

E.V.C.

Books for Students

Brown, James Duff. *Manual of library economy*, 6th edition by W. C. Berwick Sayers, 1949 (Grafton, 35s.).

There was a time when I should have taken a savage delight in reviewing this book. When I was twenty, I was a lean and hungry youth, and I kept a little sharp knife by me, to slip under the comfortable ribs of my elders. At plump forty, the fun has gone out of vivisection. I have had twenty years in which to appreciate the debt which librarianship owes to Berwick Sayers, and in fifteen of those years I have incurred more than a small personal debt to him as a kindly mentor and a shrewd advisor. Because of all this, I wish that he had left this latest edition of the *Manual* undone, for it is small pleasure to review it.

Mr. Sayers rightly says that the word *economy* in his title is to be taken to mean "the art or science of doing things in the best possible manner, without waste of time, effort or money." One looks to the manual, therefore, for a conspectus of the best possible methods to be used in municipal libraries, and one feels that each succeeding edition should represent the best accepted practice of the day in which it appears. The *Manual* is not the place for Gardner's latest theories and Callander's newest engines; nor, equally, is it the place for the museum pieces, the anti-macassars and aspidistras of British librarianship. Its function is to act as a guide to the student librarian and as a desk book for the practising chief. It should not be an historical survey nor a manifesto from the advanced

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

guard, but a sound and detailed guide to tested method. It is always dangerous to review the book which ought to have been written instead of the book which has been written, and Mr. Sayers may not agree with my standards of assessment, but I can see no other function for a book such as Brown's *Manual*.

Considered as a practical working guide to librarianship in 1949, the 6th edition of the *Manual* is defective in many particulars. It enshrines a view of our craft from which we have moved on, and it describes, without condemnation, methods which we know to be obsolete. Its illustrations, though many of the old friends of earlier editions have gone, are often old-fashioned, and their reproduction (this being presumably entirely the fault of the publisher), is deplorable.

Much dead wood should have been excised from this edition. There is no need for a page long description of the Cotgreave indicator. Complex accounts of the efforts of the nineteenth century to produce a satisfactory card cabinet have only antiquarian interest to-day. Obsolete steel shelving and Mr. Lambert's little gadgets for cluttering up shelves are no longer useful. Photographs of those great lending library counters which contain everything but a kitchen range could well be relegated in favour of detailed drawings of the more compact types which are a feature of modern library buildings. If these survivals from earlier editions had been pruned, space might have been found for detailed treatment of other topics which, in the 1949 edition, are either omitted or are given only cursory mention. Thus, microfilm receives only two brief references, each of which contains an error of fact. Mobile libraries are not mentioned at all, and there is no data on transport for branch library systems. Catalogue production, one of the biggest time consumers in modern practice, is not dealt with beyond the production of printed catalogues, and there is no study of the organization and economy of stock maintenance which would be of the slightest practical use to librarians who have to cope with an intake of books on the post-war scale. Emphasis throughout is on *ad hoc* or custom-built equipment, and the *Manual* seems completely unaware of the range of office equipment used in commerce and industry and capable of adaptation to library needs. Two lines are given to punched cards, but there is no mention of visible indexing, suspended filing, reflex copying, offset litho duplicating, film-strip, adding machines *et hoc genus omne*.

The moral of all this is, I think, that library practice to-day has gone beyond the stage where one man, however knowledgeable, can achieve an adequate survey of its method. The days when a library could be created by one man, as a *tour de force*, have gone. It may be a pity, and it may be that we are the worse for it, but the *virtuoso* performer has gone from the library platform, and his place has been taken by the co-operative group, the working party and the investigating committee. The time has come to abandon the one-man *Manual*. In its place we need a loose-leaf encyclopedia of library method, a library *Keesing's* rather than a library *Mrs. Beeton*, to whose contents specialists in all branches and at all levels of librarianship can contribute. We might then be sure of doing things in the best possible manner.

T.E.C.